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224 before the buffalo got out of range. Only one such run a day was made and, although all hunters had an equal opportunity, so to speak, since no one of them started before the others, the greatest chance of success lay with the man mounted on the fastest horse. Incidentally the gun never supplanted the bow and arrow as a weapon of the chase because, for a mounted hunter riding close to the game, the bow and arrow was just as effective and even easier to use than the gun which had to be reloaded and which was difficult to aim accurately when traveling at a fast pace. Succeeding generations of Gros Ventre boys were trained in archery right up to, and including, the time of the disappearance of the buffalo.

Our informants stated that while the surround was sometimes resorted to, the chase or run, as described above, was the method [178] preferred by the Gros Ventres. The old-fashioned methods of impounding and driving over the cliff were seemingly abandoned by the Gros Ventres in the 1830's. It was stated that an old man, who died at the age of 98 in 1920, witnessed the last big impounding at the head of the Teton River when he was twelve years old.[5] Our oldest informant (b. 1854) knew of these methods only because her grandmother and other older people had told her stories of what they had witnessed. She put it as follows: "When my grandmother was a young woman, the Gros Ventres were very badly off. Only a person here and there would have a horse, and these horses were not the fast kind that can be used in hunting. In fact they did better by building a row of rocks to lead the buffalo into a big corral;[6] or else by having a man covered with a buffalo robe to act as decoy. This man would run forward toward a steep precipice and just at the edge would jump aside while the buffalo following him would go over. The animals which were not crippled in the fall would be shot with bow and arrow. Every- [492] body had to use dogs to drag their stuff as the people moved around; and they cut the lodges in two so the load would not be too heavy for a dog to draw."

231 The possession of an adequate number of horses, then, seems

[5] Denig, p. 532, confirms this, holding that all the northern plains tribes, except the Assiniboine and Cree, are so well supplied with horses that they do not need to resort to the corral.

[6] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, pp. 148–49.

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to have been the key factor in the abandonment of the earlier methods of hunting buffalo. The situation of the Gros Ventres in regard to horses, which had apparently been so bad in approximately the first two decades of the 19th century, gradually improved, according to our informants, by natural increase of the few horses they had and by successful raiding of the enemy, especially for the fast buffalo horse. If Bradley's figures are correct, the Gros Ventres averaged five horses per family in 1830. According to our informants, by about 1850 they had "lots of horses," but we know that, even so, the number of horses fluctuated considerably after that date. Coming Daylight, for instance, remembered clearly several times prior to 1880 when the whole tribe was relatively poor in horses. During these periods people were forced to cache as much as possible so they wouldn't be too heavily burdened as they traveled about on foot. No doubt the same factors were operative in the Gros Ventre area as obtained in Blackfoot territory—severe winters and skin diseases among the horses.[1]

In any case, even in relatively prosperous times, seldom if ever did an individual possess great herds such as are described for the Kiowa. The Boy stated that his father, Lame Bull[illegible] was an outstanding man, had a herd of about 60 horses. Co[illegible]ylight explained: "Each family kept its own little bunch o[illegible]rses. In early morning they would be taken out to pasture, usually by the older boys; around the middle of the day they would be watered and driven out again; in the evening they would be brought back and the more valuable ones, the swift buffalo horses, were always kept tied close by at night in case of raid by the enemy."

Such a family-owned herd would be differentiated and would ideally include pack horses, riding horses, and a few buffalo horses. The right of disposal over his own horses was, however, recognized for each individual man, woman and child. A man had the possibility of augmenting his own holdings directly by raiding the enemy. Because of the social recognition attendant upon successful raiding, as well as the economic necessity for controlling the means of production, the individual might actually devote in the course of a year more time and energy in pursuing this objective

[1] For an excellent discussion of the whole problem, see Ewers, 1943.

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than in the actual production of raw materials. This was especially true of the young unmarried man who, though his ability to hunt was important, was even more anxious to establish his reputation for bravery.

Food

262 The Gros Ventres met their need for food very largely, but not exclusively, through a meat diet. Flesh of the buffalo was the meat par excellence and was considered by the Gros Ventres their "real food." To those who had been brought up on buffalo meat, beef was a poor substitute. It was said, by those who experienced the change of diet after the disappearance of the buffalo in 1884, that many of the older people "died of starvation" when deprived of buffalo meat. The Gros Ventres refused for a long time to accustom themselves to beef because "beef, even when fresh, smells so badly, and when we would see oxen slobber it turned our stomachs."

Buffalo meat, either fresh or dried, formed a major part of the dietary the year round. Each man had his own preference as to various parts of the buffalo. Charles Buckman, for instance, liked best the flanks, if fat, but some preferred the brisket. The tenderest part was the hump (withers) and the tenderloin was also a delicacy. Roast ribs, a whole rib for each person, were considered a most succulent feast and the embryo was highly appreciated. It was customary to eat raw the liver and manifolds dipped in blood and to drink some of the fresh blood. Nothing of the buffalo was wasted and every possible part was eaten even to the predigested vegetable food from the stomach and the soft inner part of the hoofs. The coagulated milk from a buffalo cow carrying young or nursing a calf was enjoyed by most, although it was [251] reported that some individuals did not care particularly for it. The guts were cleaned, dried, cooked and put away, and the lungs were sliced and dried. To be eaten with dried meat the back fat was cooked, and tallow was used in like manner. The bones were broken and boiled, and, after the grease was skimmed off and 252 stored, the bone broth was used plain or with either blood or 262 berries therein.

Pemmican was made from the base of the tenderloin, a long

strip on each side of the backbone. The meat was jerked, roasted a little and pounded. Then bone grease was kneaded into the pounded meat and occasionally berries, especially saskatoon berries, were put in. No further cooking was necessary and this preparation was very useful when they had to eat in a hurry, as, for example, at the Sacrifice Dance, when they didn't know at what moment some order might be given by the crier. 252 262

Rated next in the scale of foods valued by the Gros Ventres was the flesh of puppies. Although the flesh of grown dogs was consumed only in times of "famine," nursing pups were always considered a great delicacy. "These young pups are to us like chicken is for the whites, and that is why you see so many Indians with female dogs." In fact in former times the following method was used to assist a bitch which was having difficulty in bearing her litter: "One person would tie a rope around the bitch's neck and lead her around the lodge, while another would follow and, as they reached each of the four points of the compass, hit her on both hind-quarters with a moccasin filled with charcoal; by the time she reached the door again, the litter would come!" 262 231

The flesh and other edible parts of most of the animals hunted by the Gros Ventres were appreciated if there happened to be a dearth of buffalo, or as a welcome change during the winter months from the dried buffalo meat. As a rule these animals would be exploited for purposes other than for food. So far as additional meat diet is concerned, however, elk, deer, and antelope were the most important. Beaver probably came next. Prairie dogs, gophers, and several kinds of rabbit—cottontail, snowshoe, and jackrabbit—all were eaten in case of extremity, but these were ordinarily considered suitable trapping for children. Bear—black, brown and grizzly—were not sought, but should a hunter come across one, he killed it and the flesh was eaten, the grease being the only part that was to them worth storing. Some birds and their eggs were edible, such as duck, goose, grouse, prairie-chicken, and curlew.[8] There was a special use for meadowlark eggs.[9] Badger and porcupine were eaten, as also occasionally the young of wolves and coyote. The full-grown wolf and coyote, as well as fox, 262

[8] Eggs were a favorite food, according to Kroeber, 1908, p. 149.
[9] See p. 143.

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on the part of the men for supplying the raw materials. This, however, was more than offset by the fact that the time consumed in producing the raw materials was less than that required to process and complete the manufacture thereof. The following calculation will give at least a rough approximation of the situation. It was estimated by our Gros Ventre informants that one woman would be able to dress about twenty robes a season, i.e., robes taken in the fall hunt and dressed with the fur on. This means she had to devote the equivalent of 60 full days' time to this task alone.[7] Actually she would not be free to work on robes exclusively, as she had to dress other kinds of skins, carry on her ordinary daily routine of procuring fuel and water, care of children, preparation of the daily meals, and in addition cut the enormous quantities of meat to be dried for winter consumption.[8] In contrast, if we can rely on Hornaday's figures, 15–25 men killed about a thousand buffalo in a fall season,[9] which means, taking the higher figure, one man alone would average more than two women could handle.

Value

Given the abundant supply of game, especially of buffalo, and the methods of exploiting it, the individual who controlled the relatively scarce means of production was in a position to command a larger labor supply and consequently to produce a larger surplus. The Boy summed up the situation thus: "The Gros Ventres in their old way of life used to want a lot of horses because they knew from experience that if a man had a lot of horses he could acquire a little wealth and position in life. If, for instance, a family had a lot of horses, the man might have three or four or five buffalo horses with which to chase game and would bring in lots of skins and meat and could afford more wives, and the more wives he had the bigger and wealthier he would be. He could have

[7] Denig, pp. 540–41, estimates three days' work to prepare one robe for market and states that the preparation of 25 to 30 robes was an excellent winter's work for one woman, with the average at 18 to 20 robes.

[8] Hornaday, p 436, states that a whole buffalo cow, if economically worked up, yields about 55 lbs. of pemmican and 45 lbs. of dried meat.

[9] Hornaday, p. 465.

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556 231 a great big lodge and all the other things that were required. But some men might have only one horse and therefore only one wife. Such men wouldn't amount to much; they would be by-passed all the time and couldn't get anywhere. Therefore men did really desperate things in order to obtain horses."[10]

556 231 735 Horses were thus the most valuable item in Gros Ventre economy. Other informants illustrated this attitude. Garter Snake, for instance, stated: "As a little girl I didn't know poverty. My parents were rich. They had everything they wanted for their lodge, and clothing, and all kinds of horses so I was never in want at any time. Nevertheless, my father, when he was a little fellow, was very poor and had no horse to ride. Possibly somebody would put his mother, who was a widow, on a horse, but he would have to walk. He had hardly any clothes, he was so poor. One time when he was about 12, the camp was moving and they were going to go quite a distance. He was way behind because he would wait umtil everybody had gone, and then would follow as best he could. This day he went up on a hill to see where the people were camping next, and then he just lay there crying because he pitied himself for being so poor. It was at this time that he was granted his first experience [with the supernatural]. Later on, having made an offering of a black shirt and some feathers, which he had begged from someone at the camp, and having cut off the first joint of the little finger of his left hand, he was told in a vision: 'Son, I invited you here and I am glad you came. Look over that way (the direction in which the camps lay). You are poor now, but see those camps? You are going to be noted there. Everyone there is going to respect you and depend on you. And look this way (the opposite direction). See that big band of horses? Those are your horses. Of course you won't get them right away, but that is what you are going to have.' He was granted many powers later on, among them how to operate with a woodpecker feather; how to check hemorrhage; how to cure stoppage of the male urinary tract; how to cure consumption; how to revive a horse which was 'played out'; how to make raiders invisible so they could successfully steal horses. And he finally attained those horses he had been shown."

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[10] Cf. Denig, p. 505, "An Indian with one wife cannot amass property."

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The above case illustrates how it was possible for a man, in spite of a poor start in life, to rise. Children were instructed by their elders, as was Thick by his maternal uncle: "Above all things try to have horses. Try to have property and whatever you have, take care of it. By having lots of horses and property, people will respect you and look upon you as somebody."

Again Coming Daylight stated: "They used to think more of horses than of anything else. They were sure proud of owning a pinto pony. In telling stories when they wanted to describe the best they could think of they would say: 'You should have seen her horse—it was a big pinto pony.'" And in telling of a relative of hers, Woman Chief, Coming Daylight said: "Her husband was not very handsome, but they were well-to-do and she always rode top horses."

While all horses were as a rule well cared for, special attention was devoted to the buffalo horses. On the hunt, for instance, these horses would be led along unburdened by pack or rider to keep them fresh. They were ridden only for the actual chase and after the kill were turned loose to roll around and graze like young colts. When the butchering was completed the meat was packed on other horses and the swift buffalo horses were then led home again. These horses were ridden on social and ceremonial occasions, when their owners wished to show off, and of course the soldier societies were well mounted, but such use amounted to no more than a good work-out, and these valuable horses were never abused nor wilfully exhausted.

Children were exhorted to take care of their property, especially of horses, and the girls were advised that "a mare is worth everything—it increases—treat her well." It was stated that some attention was given to breeding. A man might judge that a colt showed possibilities of becoming a fast horse. If it fulfilled the early promise the colts it sired would be watched. The less likely of these would be castrated. Likewise, a good mare would, if possible, be retained by the owner for breeding. A man who owned a particularly good buffalo horse might, on his deathbed, either order that it be killed at his grave or give it to some relative he knew cared well for horses, with instructions never to abuse it nor give it away.

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426 231 The lending of horses, especially in an emergency, was not uncommon especially among relatives. The owner however retained full rights and could dictate to the borrower the use to which the horse might be put. "One time, for instance," according to Singer whose husband Iron Bucket was an eye-witness, "there were four lodges or families of Gros Ventres who happened to be traveling along separated from the larger group. Bear Nose's mother was taking care of a young man who was exceedingly ill. She didn't own the horse which was drawing the travois upon which the young man was lying. As the party climbed a steep hill the lines tying the travois to the horse broke and the travois dropped to the ground. The woman who owned the horse was already at the top and called down: 'Just leave him. Just leave him. You are always hauling him around with my horse.' The others told this woman owner: 'Let us pack him once more and wherever we stop we will make a sweatbath house for him and leave him in there and leave food for him.' But the owner didn't want it that way. The others told her again: 'Just pack him once more. You should think of the time when he was a Scout [at Ft. Assiniboine] and he used to get a lot of grub for you [with his pay].' But she said: 'No. I won't be packing him any more.' He was pretty far gone—his body already covered with flies—but the one who had been caring for him finally was forced to abandon him there with his few belongings and without any shelter or anything else. When they left him he had a sheet over his head and he started to cry. But the owner of the horse was adamant. The others of the party could argue with her, but could take no further action. They moved quite a distance and that very night a terrible storm came up and probably finished the young man. The woman who had been caring for him died shortly thereafter, and the others thought this was a consequence of their having abandoned him so callously, but they all said: 'It should have been the owner of the horse who died instead of the one who cared for him."

231 721 Because the real competition among the northern plains tribes was for horses, it was not uncommon that a relatively well-to-do family might lose their entire pack of horses through a single raid by the enemy. The following experience of Coming Daylight illustrates the point.

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"The Gros Ventres moved camp again to new grounds across the Missouri. They were camped on a bluff overlooking the River, and there was a nice valley full of hay behind them. Her grandmother suggested that their family tie all their horses down in that nice valley. The men in the group had, however, obtained whiskey and a lot of them were drunk—even her uncle—and after they camped they kept on 'celebrating.' That night she was feeling very sick as it was almost time for her first child to be born. She couldn't sleep and would go out and sit leaning back against another lodge. While she was sitting there it was very dark, but she thought she saw two figures on horseback moving along the edge of the bluff, very, very, slowly, as though they were sneaking. So she went to her lodge and awakened her husband and told him she had seen strange men around. Of course it was very dark and she couldn't describe them so her husband didn't get excited and said: 'Oh, it is just some of our people.' She was still uneasy, however, and returned a couple of more times and told her husband what she had seen, but he didn't believe her nor pay any attention. A little later as she was lying fully dressed in her lodge, very uncomfortable—raising up, lying down, raising up again—not sleeping, she heard leaves rattling as someone walked slowly from the brush towards her lodge. Her uncle called her by name. She recognized his voice. He told her: 'All our horses are gone!' He had sobered up and had gone to see where the horses were. She just felt sick over it. They had lost all their beautiful horses.

"She was so mad at her husband, because he had been stubborn and hadn't given chase to the enemy, that she went out and walked and walked. She doesn't know how far she traveled in the dim moonlight when she heard a horse neighing and, since everyone knows his own horses when he hears them, she realized that it was the light buckskin horse, her husband's principal horse for hunting buffalo and for war. It was his best horse. She went in the direction she heard the neighing and the horse came towards her. It was all wet and had a short rope around its neck. She caught the horse and supposed that the enemy must have taken the stolen horses across the river and that this one must have been doing something that made them cut it loose. As she was leading the horse back to camp she saw something white lying there. She

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231 721 got scared and ran to the other side of the horse. Finally she took a big stick and threw it at the white thing and still it didn't move so she went closer and found it to be a Hudson's Bay blanket just soaking wet. The enemy must have used it when they crossed the river. So she dragged it home to her lodge. When she got there she called to her grandmother: 'Is he there?' Her grandmother said: 'He is.' She was still furious at her husband and called to him: 'Come out! I am giving you this,' and she said it in the way people speak when they are giving something on return from war. She was giving her husband his own buffalo horse! He however didn't say anything or make any exclamation. This so enraged her that she took the blanket and rolled it up as small as she could and threw it at him, hitting him on the chest saying: 'Here is another thing I brought you!' Then he laughed. But she had at least saved one of the most valuable horses.

[431] "The next morning the rest of the Gros Ventres in the party moved on, leaving this family behind. But fortunately some others came along and seeing their plight gave them horses, for example, Pemmican gave one to Coming Daylight, Little Shields gave her uncle one, and Sleeping Bear gave her husband one."

231 436 The importance of various transactions could be gauged by whether or not a horse were included, other things such as fancy clothing, ornaments, guns, etc. being mentioned as "thrown in."

[554] A person who gave a horse in whatever connection accrued prestige for himself and at the same time showed in what esteem the donor

[583] held the recipient. Horses were generally included in the bride price; in inaugurating the more serious type of enemy-friendship; in payment for services of the medicine man in curing certain types of illness, and in payment to the ceremonial grandfather as well as in payment to the namer or ear-piercer of a child; in settling disputes; in gambling; in gifts to others in honor of relatives, and in meeting certain other kinship obligations.

231 556 Horses could be acquired by a man through raiding the enemy; by gift from relatives and from non-relatives in honor of someone else or in instituting the enemy-friendship; in the bride price of a sister, daughter, or maternal niece; in payment for services rendered; in gambling; through inheritance; in trading with the whites. A woman might share in the bride price of her brother's

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daughter, and might receive gifts from relatives, but would otherwise have few opportunities of obtaining horses.

In former times the rules regarding inheritance were fairly simple. If a man died, his relatives took the more valuable livestock, while anyone was free to come into the lodge and take any other personal property of the deceased which was not to be buried with him. The man's relatives would not, however, take the horses which belonged to his wife or wives, or which had been given before his death to his children. When a woman died she usually would have little valuable property in any case, but, again, any other woman might rush in and strip the lodge of whatever personal property might be therein, including food. The close family of the deceased were "so grief-stricken that they wouldn't notice who takes what," and "a husband would never keep anything of his wife's." It was said, too, that "women were braver than men in disposing of their property before death, and often gave gifts of personal property to those they wished to have them."

In objects derived from the white man, the value put upon them was mainly utilitarian. For example, in matching wagers on one occasion a man put up a gold watch. There was no one on the other side who had a watch to offer, but a spy-glass was considered the equivalent. It was explained that the value of the watch in dollars—whether it had a fine gold case or not—would not be taken into consideration. The question in matching was to find things of equal value to the Indian in his way of life. To illustrate this The Boy told of a gift to his father, Lame Bull, from a white trader on the Saskatchewan, of a hobble which locked. "Perhaps this didn't have a high value in dollars, but it was considered extremely valuable by Lame Bull because it saved him many a race horse. Even though the enemy might sneak a horse out of camp, being unable to unfasten the hobble, he would have to abandon the valuable horse before getting very far away."

On the other hand, while utility was certainly an important consideration in the Gros Ventres' evaluation of goods produced by themselves, various other elements were taken into account. A horse procured from the enemy was perhaps the most valuable of all things to the Gros Ventres; aside from other considerations, a man would have risked his life to obtain it and that in itself lent

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value. Thus any object captured from the enemy, no matter how trivial it might be, was more valuable than a duplicate of that same thing obtained in any other way, and could be used to initiate an enemy-friendship, one of the most important of Gros Ventre transactions. A man who gave a horse, rather than or in addition to other items—to establish the enemy-friendship, to pay for the curing of a relative, to someone in honor of his relative, to his ceremonial grandfather for guiding him through the Sacred Dance, to wager in gambling, to show how much he thought of his brother-in-law in return for so simple a gift as the flesh of a puppy—would gain in prestige, for he thus established for himself a reputation for "being somebody."

The amount of labor that went into the making of an object, such as the polished deer-hoof trimming on a robe, was an element in its value. When the robe was old and worn the recipient thereof would remove the fringe and return to the donor "so she could use them again." Scarcity, too, entered into evaluation of goods. Eagle feathers were, for instance, more valuable than other kinds of feathers. Again, as to elk teeth, it was explained: "The elk has only two teeth that are like ivory,[11] and so it takes a long time to accumulate them. They are to us Gros Ventres like pearls are to the whites. They were our greatest decoration. They are valuable even today, and, while imitations are sometimes used, you can always tell the difference."

Exchange and Distribution

There was actually no need for economic exchange within the tribe, with the object of obtaining the necessities of life, but a need had developed for exchange with the fur traders to obtain guns, whiskey, metal objects—kettles, scraper-blades, etc.—cloth, tobacco, beads, paints, and so on. After about 1830, the medium of exchange with traders was the buffalo robe, which rapidly increased in value at the expense of beaver.[12] Traders on the Missouri accepted other items produced by the Indians, but everything was equated in terms of robes.[13]

[11] These are the rudimentary canines. Cf. Seton, v. 3, p. 5.

[12] Bradley, pp. 203–04.

[13] According to Denig, p. 421, an Assiniboine chief on Jan. 8, 1852, was

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around it, but were taught and trained to be quiet around it and to observe reverence toward it. 784

No whistling or crying was permitted in the keeper's lodge. The keeper and co-keeper were forbidden to cry in the presence of the Pipe, if, for instance, they had lost a relative. A crying baby was never allowed in the lodge with the Pipe. As soon as the infant started to cry it was taken out. If, as previously noted, a man who had a young wife with a baby took the Pipe, she and the infant would be sent out of the Pipe lodge to a nearby lodge. [854]

Dogs were never allowed to enter the lodge where the Pipe was. If the keeper or co-keeper owned a dogskin robe, the rules forbade their using it. [231]

The people were not allowed to go to the keeper's lodge to get fire, as they used to go to other lodges in the early morning.

Breaking bones to extract marrow was prohibited in the keeper's lodge. If this were done, some accident, such as the breaking of a leg or arm, would happen to some relative of the keeper [or of the delinquent?]. [264]

The door of the keeper's lodge had to be kept closed, and the back cover of the lodge could not be lifted up in the warm summertime to get air.

A war party before starting off would sing at the door of each clan chief's lodge, but not at the door of the keeper's. [726]

When people went to the keeper's lodge for a social smoke and feast, they had to keep their wits about them and watch their speech carefully lest they should unthinkingly tell lies, vulgar or obscene stories, or start a war-deed contest.

There was a very strict prohibition against telling lies in the keeper's lodge.

If two men, while in the keeper's lodge, forgot themselves and started a war-deed contest, the keeper would remind them: "You are mistaken in talking so in here. Now you will have to continue for three days and nights." During this time all who were present when the slip was first made had to stay day and night in the lodge of the keeper, who would provide them with food and tobacco. These listeners would egg on and laughingly banter the two contestants and decide on the winner. After a while the pair's 784 517